MONTEREY NEWS

February 2010
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The Town

by Laurily K. Epstein

Town Accountant Retiring

Barbara Gauthier, Town Accountant for the past twenty years, is retiring. After reviewing and interviewing a half-dozen applicants to succeed Gauthier, the Select Board chose Steve Pullen, a Monterey farmer and retired CPA. Pullen will be training with Gauthier until May 1, when he will take over his duties officially.

In the ten years since Pullen and his wife, Sally, moved to Monterey from Burlington, Vermont, he has become an integral part of the community, serving as the treasurer of the local United Church of Christ and as a member of their Parish Council, as a board member of the Monterey Water Company, and a member of the Monterey Cemetery Committee. As one of the founders of the Intervale CSA in Burlington, Pullen has a long history in agriculture. After resettling in Monterey, the Pullens established Greenhaven Farm and sell their produce at their farmstand and at the Lenox Farmers Market. After Pullen assumes his official duties, he will resign from the Cemetery Committee as required by town bylaws.

After conducting the town audit required every three years, auditor Kevin Fox affirmed to the Select Board that the town budget numbers are correct. "Everything is accurate and reconciled," he said, adding "You operate on reliable data." Monterey has good monetary reserves: 15 percent of the 2009 revenue is on reserve, and the stabilization fund provides another 17.5 percent Given that the Department of Revenue uses a 10-percent reserve as its benchmark, Monterey's reserve of 32.5 percent is excellent.

Fox was asked how the financial audit helps the town pay for its planned

A family makes its way across the ice on frozen Lake Buel in mid-January. (Photo by Stephen Rose)

salt shed. Town Treasurer Pat Mielke told the Select Board that it could draw from the reserves.

Although Fox's report showed Monterey's financial managers to be doing an excellent job, he nonetheless had suggestions for improvement. These included establishing an agency account for funds due to the Commonwealth (e.g., licenses for fish and game) and departmental receipt policies and procedures; improving physical security for the tax collector's office; and improving various internal controls.

Fox also noted that since the town employee handbook has not been updated since 1993, it was due for review and distribution to employees. When Select Board member Jonathan Sylbert asked Interdepartmental Secretary Melissa Noe about this handbook, she said that some of Monterey's personnel policies are part of the town's bylaws, which would require action at Town Meeting. Noe will provide the Select Board with a draft of a revised employee handbook.

Police Department

At the first Select Board meeting of 2010, Chief of Police Gareth Backhaus began his report by noting his concern about the decreasing capabilities of the utility companies that service Monterey. Both Verizon and National Grid were criticized for the continuing cutbacks in their service, moves that the Police Chief believes can harm Monterey citizens. Local operations of both companies have been sharply curtailed so that when electricity fails, as happened twice in December, not only did many phone lines go dead, but repairs had to wait for service personnel to drive in from Springfield or for approval from officials in Boston.

Backhaus is particularly worried because in the event of a serious ice or snow storm, the only available shelter for Monterey residents is Mt. Everett School, a long way to travel if the town loses power for any length of time. Originally Monterey's emergency shelter was Muddy Brook School, but somehow a decision was made that emergency centers for towns had to be within the town's school district. One Select Board member suggested that Monterey choice out its emergency center to Great Barrington.

Backhaus's concern about the diminution of vital utilities is shared by the Select Board, which agreed to write officials at both companies, as well as contacting Rep. Smitty Pignatelli and Sen. Benjamin Downing. Backhaus also suggested that the Select Board work with other local Select Boards to emphasize the severity of the situation to the penny-pinching utilities.

Not only has Ivan Seidenberg, CEO of Verizon, announced that Verizon "is no longer interested in telephones that are connected with wires," but his company removed the five-decade-old public telephone at the Monterey General Store. This is consistent with Verizon's decision to shut down its pay phone business nationwide. The Select Board decided to put up a sign where the telephone used to be notifying people that, if necessary, they could use the emergency telephone now located outside of Town Hall. The Select Board also discussed the possibility of providing a three-way public telephone.

Items of interest from the police blotter include: an ongoing investigation of credit card fraud, false alarms on Swann Road and Hupi Road, an abandoned 911 on Gould Road due to dialing error, two phone calls concerning power outages, a complaint about a Verizon truck parked in the middle of Laurel Hill Road, a potential domestic problem advisory, a motor vehicle accident on Mt. Hunger, and a well-being check on the same road. Additionally, the Police Department assisted the Fire Department on Mt. Hunger Road and on a medical call on Tyringham Road.

At the January 25th Select Board meeting, Chief Backhaus introduced John Willey, a candidate for the fulltime police

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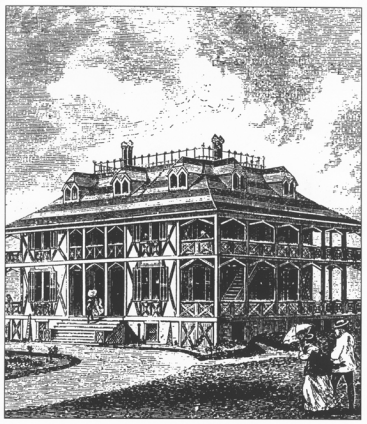

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position that has been filled by part-timers for the last eighteen months. Willey, currently employed part-time by the Lenox Police Department, recently completed a fulltime academy course. His background includes time spent as a paratrooper in Iraq and work with Hillcrest in Lenox.

Highway Department

At the January 11th Select Board meeting, Highway Superintendent Maynard Forbes reported that his department dealt with "persistent nuisance precipitation," or a lot of small storms. Removal of a damaged 100-foot pine tree on Hupi Road was so complicated that a special crane from Rhode Island had to be brought in for assistance. The two-day job required that all power and phone lines nearby had to be taken down before and restored after the tree came down.

There was discussion about how the $5,888.85 in funds from the Clean Energy Choice Grant can be transferred from the Highway Department to the school district since the Highway Department is unable to spend the funds.

Jeremiah Pollard, the town attorney, advised the Select Board not to adopt a policy about handling structures built in the town's right of way. The preferred way to deal with such matters is on a case-by-case basis. As Select Board member Wayne Burkhart pointed out, if a structure is dangerous it should be removed. If not, well, not.

Two and one-half years ago Monterey applied for a STRAP grant for $225,000, funds that would pay for the town to rebuild Route 23 before repaving it. Forbes told the Select Board that the state has awarded the grants, but Monterey was not among the towns to receive them. The ostensible reason for this denial is that Monterey would receive TIP (Transportation Improvement Program) funds. But the TIP funds are not coming to town. Thus, Forbes is planning to have the state Highway Commissioner come to town to explain the state's denial to the Select Board.

Discussion continues on building the town salt shed. Noting that the town had exhausted its efforts for state funding of the salt shed, Forbes asked if he could put the project out to bid in March so that it could begin in April. The Select Board noted that authorization to borrow $320,000 for this purpose is still valid. This expenditure would require an annual payment of $65,000 for the loan and interest in each of the next five years. Sylbert asked the Finance Committee to advise if the town could afford this amount in the current financial climate.

Monterey has a new youth hockey group of players ages 8–14. The informal team meets Saturdays 8–10am at the rink behind the Fire Station on Route 23. The free, noncontact, soft puck clinics and games are coached by Michael Wolski. Players of all levels are welcome anytime during the season, which lasts until around March 10. For more information, email michaelwolskiart@gmail.com.

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee underwent extensive personnel changes in January. Maryellen Brown had to resign for personal reasons. The Select Board thanked her for her service, saying it was sorry to see her leave. The Select Board then quickly voted to accept Stan Ross's offer to serve on the Finance Committee until Town Meeting. Dan Moriarty then resigned, apparently in a disagreement about the new composition of the committee and how financial committee data are stored.

The Select Board and newly constituted Finance Committee agreed that the Committee's data should not be on a personal computer, but on a computer available to the Committee at Town Hall. Interdepartmental Secretary Melissa Noe will provide the committee with last year's budget numbers by line item, and work with the committee to develop the appropriate spread sheets.

Broadband

Local broadband advocate and Monterey representative on the Southern

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Berkshire Technology Committee Monica Webb brought the Select Board up to date on activities to facilitate broadband service in all unserved and underserved towns in Massachusetts. Select Board chairman Scott Jenssen will join Webb at a regional broadband meeting on February 6 in Northampton.

Describing fiber optics as "future proof," Webb reported that the broadband movement is looking at fiber optics as the best design for long-term high-speed access to the increasingly large applications in use today. "The reality of future infrastructure is that it has to be fiber," Webb said. Noting that no business model has made sense in low-density areas like the southern Berkshires, Webb said that municipal authorities or community collectives are ideal. "They take the profit incentive out of the picture, " she said. Those active in the attempts to bring the Berkshires up to literal and figurative speed say that wireless is good for mobility, but it is not feasible for fixed bandwidth. Only fiber can handle that type of large and ever-expanding load.

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission has completed studies for eleven of the towns currently underserved, and will be doing more such studies in 2010.

Agricultural Commission

Laurily Epstein, chairman of the Monterey Agricultural Commission, reported on a Western Massachusetts Agricultural Commission meeting held at Hancock Shaker Village on January 9. Like Monterey, many Berkshire communities formed agricultural commissions three or four years ago, and most also passed legislation to create right-to-farm laws, as did Monterey. Activities reported by various local ag commissions include establishing rabies clinics, distributing maps of local farms, and encouraging local farmers markets.

Dick Tryon reported to the Select Board that the Massachusetts Farm Bureau has a new executive director, a new president, and a largely new staff. Noting that the Monterey Agricultural Commission needs new members, he volunteered to serve on the commission, and the Select Board voted unanimously to appoint him. Epstein announced that Bettina Schwartz, a new farmer in Monterey, is also interested in serving on the commission.

This and That

Select Board member Wayne Burkhart announced that Berkshire Regional Planning Commission extended its deadline for applications for technical assistance grants until January 15. BRPC makes grants up to $5,800 to communities to help them with projects such as zoning changes. Burkhart plans to ask BRPC for funds to help rewrite Monterey's communications bylaws. Michael Storch said that eleven towns in the Southern Berkshires need to change these bylaws and that perhaps the grant could help all of them.

A petition is being circulated around town to create a dog park on the southern side of the Wilson-McLaughlin property. Questions about the maintenance of such a park arose. The possibility of a community garden on the northern side of the same property was also mentioned.

Select Board chair Scott Jenssen received an inquiry from a Monterey resident asking why the town does not have its own ambulance services. Speaking as a member of the Monterey Fire Department, Maynard Forbes said that providing ambulance services requires properly trained volunteers, a task that far exceeds the financial resources of not just the town, but the entire Southern Berkshires. Forbes reminded the Select Board that Monterey is a small town in a rural area. "Population, distance, and money" are why the Southern Berkshires is the only part of Massachusetts that does not have a paramedic service.

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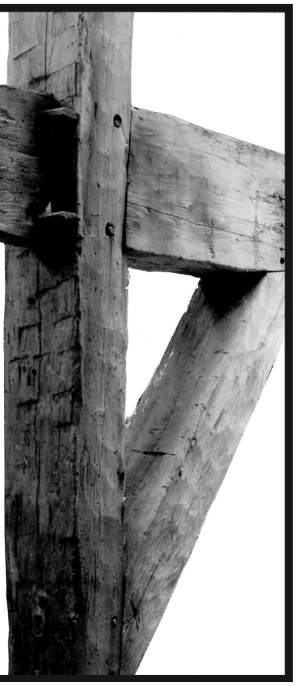

Monterey Community Center Grows a Garden

We've begun work in earnest on the Monterey Community Garden, and it's an exciting prospect. Wouldn't it be fantastic to have a place to grow food and flowers alongside other Monterey residents? Members of the Wilson Committee met with interested people from Monterey to get ideas about what everyone sees as important aspects of a community garden. Everyone attending contributed great ideas. We want this garden to be all organic, to provide space for schoolchildren to learn about gardening, and to make plots available to Monterey residents who may not have the space or sufficient sun to grow their own food.

We want everyone to have the opportunity to enjoy their time in the community garden, and to that end we will start this year with a fence, access to water, and guidance available to anyone who is a new gardener or needs a little refresher. Down the road a bit, we would like to see even more use made of the land at the Wilson-McLaughlin House. All kinds of good things can happen—a storage shed for tools, a space with tables and chairs for picnics, even a communal root cellar are possibilities.

Several generous Monterey residents have already offered finished compost. We would be grateful for any fence posts, sturdy fencing material, garden tools, wheelbarrows, hoses, and rain barrels that anyone is willing to donate. Please call Ruth Green at 528-5908 if you do, and she'll make arrangements to pick things up.

If you are interested in gardening with us this summer, or you just want to get some more information, please join us on Saturday morning, February 27, at 10 a.m. in the Meetinghouse basement. We will present plans for the garden in detail, including sliding scale dues, guidelines for neighborly use, and timing, and answer any questions you may have. Hope to see you there! In the meantime, check out our website at www.ccmonterey.org for more information about the garden.

— Ruth Green

Gwendolyn VanSant at Feb. 17th Community Potluck

An overflow crowd of more than fifty greeted Michael Banner at the January Potluck. His presentation detailed how he draws from the beauty surrounding us here in the Berkshires to create his exquisite silver pieces. We are very grateful to him and Maureen for a fascinating glimpse into the work that goes into fashioning their art.

Gwendolyn Hampton VanSant of BRIDGE, Berkshire Resources for the Integration of Diverse Groups and Education, is presenting at the Monterey Community Supper on February 17. Gwendolyn, a Monterey resident, is the Executive Director and cofounder of BRIDGE, a nonprofit located in Housatonic. BRIDGE addresses diversity issues by providing opportunities for education, collaboration, dialogue, and training to the community at large. Her clients range from all town employees of Great Barrington to foster families of Brightside Families and Children. Also among her clients are Fairview Hospital and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW Berkshire Chapter).

BRIDGE is running a Bilingual Literacy and Tolerance Program, Multicultural Bridges, for its second year. This year the program will be all day at the Norman Rockwell Museum where the kids, ages 5-8, will receive tolerance lessons.

BRIDGE also has a budding youth corps, which is experiencing its first Cultural Ambassador Training, an all-day youth retreat in a cozy cottage on the Stockbridge Bowl where we will play games, have discussions, role play, and get to know one another, all the while developing tools for our youth as they encounter diversity issues in their day-to-day lives.

Come learn more about BRIDGE, its multicultural community, and its many offerings and many successes. BRIDGE runs mainly on community support and participation in human hours, financial contributions, and other donations. Contact information: gwendolyn@multiculturalbridge.org; 413-274-1001.

The next Monterey Community Potluck Dinner will be held on February 17 at 6 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall of the Monterey Meetinghouse. Please bring a dish to share with a serving utensil and a place setting and silverware for yourself. Everyone is welcome.

—Barbara Dahlman & Kyle Pierce

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Monterey Firemen's Notes

Training and Certification

The first time I walked in the door of the Monterey Firehouse (the old one at the New Marlborough Road intersection) was on a Wednesday night in 1975. Ever since then Wednesday night in my life has been known as fire meeting. The night before Thanksgiving and and the night of December 23rd this year felt very strange because other than church on Sunday I have done nothing else in my life as regularly as those Wednesday nights. That doesn't mean the firemen don't train other nights and weekends as well, but Wednesday night is constant. I can't remember most of those trainings over the years, but the knowledge and experience gained is there, and I am sometimes startled when some technique or fact pops up out of nowhere. I realize those often unexciting meetings add up somewhere in my memory and make it possible for me to help out my fellow townspeople in so many different ways. Occasionally I'll miss because of one of my children's concerts, and when I ask a fellow firefighter what I missed the answer is usually not much—but more than once I have realized something was discussed or taught that I missed. To work as a team you need to go to the practices.

Of course back in the '70s the Fire Department mostly dealt with fires, and there were big ones such as Gould Farm's barn and the old nursing home. There was, however, a need for the Fire Department to get involved in medical assistance because our town was far enough away from the hospital. The department had to take a course covering basic medical emergencies, and I had to get parental permission to watch the movie on emergency childbirth. Since then we have had to repeat the First Responder course mandated by the state every few years, but most of our calls are medical in nature and I can think of few, if any, situations that weren't covered by part of these many nights of training. Of course, the emergency medical protocols are always changing: we have come a long way from that first course. Some of our department members have taken even more time out of their busy lives and taken the next level of courses to become Emergency Medical Technicians. Not only does it take a lot of time to get that certification, but to maintain it is like having another night of fire meeting every week. I'm in awe of the amount of time it takes to do the EMT thing.

Back to fires, a lot has changed since the '70s there as well. To be brief—firefighters are expected to do more than ever with increasingly more types of construction that make the job inherently dangerous. If there is a theme I would say that has been at the forefront in all these years of training, it is SAFETY. (That is also a huge concern with medical calls—ask someone in the know about universal precautions.) Building materials, construction methods, even the locations of these emergencies—all make it impossible to do the job without lots of preparation. As those factors have grown so have the technologies and techniques of the fire service. Often those come about in response to issues, so the hope is that the problems will be recognized before someone learns the hard way. Monterey is small enough that we don't get as much practical experience as busier places, but over the years we have found an excellent way to train. Many civic-minded people have donated their houses to us to use as training. Many thanks to Steve Levkoff, Bob Cutick, Steve Aronson, and Jeff

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Lombardo, who have allowed use to use their houses for training purposes. We did not burn any of those places to the ground, and we did not even light fires in some of them, but many types of valuable training can be accomplished by banging around and doing things you can't do to a lived-in house. If anyone has plans to demolish a house in the future, please discuss with one of the firefighters ways that we could use it for training purposes. That experience could be the difference in the outcome of a future situation.

Finally, the Fire Department has taken on rescues. No one asked us if we would rescue people from a hole in the ice, a crashed plane, or a wrecked car. People get into these situations in every conceivable way and location and hour. We get called. It's next to impossible to try to think of what the next one will be, but combining the medical training and the safety and teamwork learned from firefighting we will do our best. We have been fortunate not to have had any hazardous materials situations that have gotten out of hand. Some Wednesday nights we try to imagine what we could be up against. Who could have predicted that a call to help out at a car wreck in Great Barrington would lead to a night-long odyssey of trying to find Route 23 under the downed trees from a tornado?

We don't always know what will come in the future, but on Wednesday nights, besides trying to satisfy state requirements for certification in both fire and medical fields, we try to learn to function as any team must in order to accomplish our three primary goals: life safety, incident stabilization, and property conservation. All of us are different and have individual strengths and weaknesses, but when you dial 911 as a person in need of emergency services in the Town of Monterey you expect a team to come that will help you out of a jam. We never know when, where, from whom, for what, or why the next call will come. I'm in awe of what we can do sometimes—but it wouldn't be possible if we didn't get together Wednesday night at 7 p.m. every week and prepare, using our imaginations for what is by definition often unimaginable.

— Mark Makuc, Captain
Monterey Fire Company

Bidwell House News

Isabel Sellew with new friend Bob (photo by John Sellew)

As the new director of the Bidwell House Museum, your very own museum of local colonial history, I want to tell you how happy I am to be here. I feel very fortunate that I get to be a steward of this historic house in your beautiful town—truly a blessed place. I also would like to thank you for your support of the museum. As a town and as neighbors and friends, you have kept the museum alive and well. Many of you are members of the museum, and many contribute to our Annual Appeal as well. Thank you! We could not keep going without you. Lots of you come to visit the museum or to attend one of our events: a hike, a tour, a lecture, the Pumpkinfest … Thank you, you are the most important reason we are here.

In addition, many of you volunteer your time: the Garden Angels who tend the gardens on Saturday mornings; the docents, some young, some adult, who lead tours; the kind volunteers and board members who run events for us—thank you, thank you, thank you. The Lindsay family donated the use of their beautiful home for our benefit party last summer—thank you! Kathryn Roberts, the president of our board of directors; Barbara Tryon, our treasurer; George Emmons, the chair of our buildings and grounds committee; Rob Hoogs, the chair of our governance committee; and our other Monterey resident board members Delight Dodyk, Christine Goldfinger, Colta Ives, Paula Moats, and Don Welsch all spend many hours on behalf of the museum. Thank you, the Bidwell House is blessed to have you!

You may wonder how a museum can survive in a small town on a dirt road in the middle of the forest ... and that's a good question. I think the reason is twofold: it is a historic and precious place with a fascinating story to tell about the early residents of your town. And two, it has you: a community of friends, members, and supporters who care deeply and support it generously in many ways. Over one hundred friends celebrated on Thanksgiving weekend at our Colonial Thanksgiving fundraising party. It is certainly not easy. Every year we are challenged over again, but you have made it work to a big milestone: this year the Bidwell House is celebrating its twentieth anniversary as a museum. We are planning wonderful events all season. I will let you know our schedule of events in the spring. Please plan to join us and bring your friends!

— Barbara Palmer, Executive Director,
The Bidwell House Museum

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Republican Town Committee

The Republican Town Committee will be meeting Tuesday, February 2, at 4:30 p.m. in the Meetinghouse basement in order to elect a delegate to attend the Massachusetts Republican State Convention. The only requirement for being elected is to have been a registered Republican as of December 1, 2009. Anyone interested should contact Mark Makuc, 528-1382. After that election the committee will work on nominations for the upcoming local elections in May. Anyone interested is invited to seek the Republican nomination regardless of their party affiliation—please call Fran Amidon for details at 528-1233.

On Saturday Feb. 27 the Republican Town Committee will meet to finalize the nominations at 1:00 p.m. in the Church basement. At 1:30 p.m., all registered Republicans are invited to the caucus to nominate a slate for the local elections.

Many seats on our local boards are open this year and anyone who would like to seek a spot on the ballot through the Republican caucus is respectfully asked to write a letter of intent to Mark Makuc, Chair, Box 711, Monterey, MA 01245.

Vacancy on Park Commission

The Monterey Park Commission has one vacant seat. Meetings are the first Wednesday of every month at 6:00 p.m. Interested citizens must be registered voters of Monterey, MA. Any interested parties should send a letter of interest to both the Monterey Park Commission and the Monterey Select Board at P.O. Box 308 Monterey, MA 01245.

Skating Party Feb. 15

The Monterey Park Commission will sponsor a community skating party at the skating pavilion behind the Monterey Fire Station on Monday, February 15, weather permitting, from 1–3 p.m. There will be skating, music, refreshments, and fun! Come and enjoy.

Rabies Clinic March 6

A Rabies Shot Clinic for dogs and cats will be held from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. at the Monterey Fire Station on Saturday, March 6.

Greenagers Present *The Gods Must Be Crazy* at Mahaiwe

The local youth organization Greenagers is hosting a screening *of The Gods Must Be Crazy* at the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center in Great Barrington on Friday, February 5, at 7 p.m. Tickets are just $8, and all proceeds will go towards Greenagers 2010 programming and initiatives. Come one, come all for a community night of fun and laughter.

The Gods Must Be Crazy, written and directed by Jamie Uys, was released in 1981 and has become a cult classic. The plot, "a comic allegory about a traveling Bushman who encounters modern civilization and its stranger aspects, including a clumsy scientist and a band of revolutionaries," is highly entertaining and also rich with environmental and social justice themes.

Greenagers, a program of the not-for-profit Center for Peace through Culture, is a Great Barrington-based, youth-driven organization that works on community and environmental projects. Mission: youth working to strengthen the environment and our community. Projects include, but are not limited to trail building, community gardening, nature photography, nature writing, and hiking. Please visit www.greenagers.org for more information or contact Will Conklin (director) and Samantha Halley (assistant) at 413-644-9090.

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Monterey Meets Ngalla
Well, Monterey, We Did It!

With our joint efforts and contributions to this year's holiday gift card drive, we raised enough money to purchase one hundred clean-drinking-water stations for our sister village, Ngalla, Cameroon. Four thousand dollars was what we needed to meet our goal, and that's exactly what we took in, thanks to all of you!

It's very easy for any of us to get discouraged when we see and hear of all the despair and suffering that goes on well beyond our borders of Monterey and the Berkshires. I hear myself thinking sometimes, "What can I possibly do ... I'm just one person"?

Well here's what we did together to help: Because of last year's gift card drive we were able to provide the village of Ngalla with one hundred insecticide-treated bed nets. Today one hundred families sleep more securely with reduced likelihood of malaria or another mosquito-borne illnesses.

And now, due to this year's efforts, our one hundred Ngalla families will have means to create potable drinking water, thereby protecting their immune systems and therefore their lives. Current life expectancy in rural Cameroon is something like forty-seven years, a fact I am certain we would all agree is profoundly unacceptable.

Our special friend, Dr. Ruth Engo (founder and director of African Action on Aids) and our sandals-on-the-ground presence in Cameroon, will deliver the one hundred drinking stations to Ngalla on March 20, World Water Day. She and her helpers will then spend the next two days training families on how to use their new drinking stations and how to keep them clean.

The committee wants to extend special thanks to the following neighbors and friends:

- Kenn Basler and all his team at the General Store for graciously collecting the money from gift card sales;
- the Monterey Church community for their generous, heartfelt donation;
- those of you who took it upon yourselves to take our cards to outside groups and events and be our spokespersons;
- the many people who bought anywhere from one to fifty cards, often giving a bit more than they cost;
- our several larger donors (who shall remain nameless);
- Joe Baker for graphic design support;
- Your Color Connection, Lenox, Ma., for the kind discounting of printing cost for this year's cards and posters
- and, finally, to my fellow committee members, Kathie Frome, Laraine Lippe, and Joan MacVicar who are all so talented and willing to do what it takes to see the project succeed.

Blessings to you all!

— Eileen Lawlor, Monterey Meets Ngalla, People to People Project

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Dr. Ruth Engo in Cameroon

Monterey, or Kindness in Hard Times

Kindness is the capacity to see vulnerability and needs of other people. It is the capacity to participate—even in small ways—in solving this vulnerability. It is an urgent feeling that moves us when we see someone else suffering.

Unfortunately, our world tends to be more competitive than collaborative and solving self-problems occupies more space than being kind to others.

Monterey is teaching us that even during the hardest times we all have the capacity to be kind, because when one human being is vulnerable, humankind as a whole steps into vulnerability. Just as the activities of a colony of ants clearly demonstrate an incredible interrelationship among all its members, so, too, do the individuals as well as the institutions of Monterey demonstrate this same interrelationship among humankind by linking with the people of Ngalla (Cameroon) to create a sister village. From this people-to-people partnership, a number of vulnerabilities are being addressed in the village of Ngalla through the work of African Action on AIDS. These include: fighting against AIDS and malaria; fulfilling needs for potable water, clean hands and toilets; and creating the capacity for young people to visualize their future without AIDS and malaria.

In thanking the entire community for this *leçon magistrale*, I also want to thank Monterey for welcoming me as an individual so that now I truly feel that **my other home is in the Berkshires!**

With gratitude,

— Ruth Bamela Engo

Local Agriculture on the Move

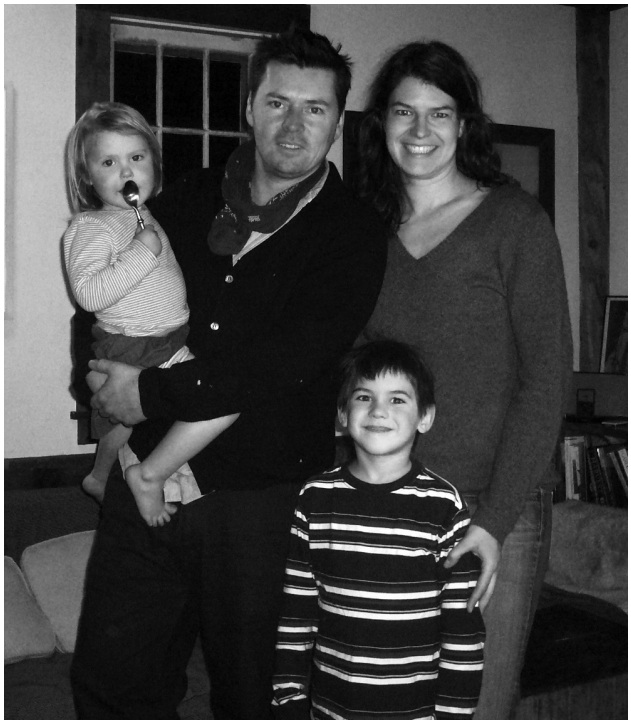
Mark Firth and Bettina Schwartz, recent immigrants to Monterey from Brooklyn, exemplify a small but important trend in American agriculture: the number of small farmers is on the rise throughout America. Mark and Bettina recently bought Chestnut Hill Farm from Ellen Pearson and plan to raise pigs and sheep for their restaurants and butcher shop in the trendy Williamsburg neighborhood in Brooklyn.

The couple was able to buy the farm with creative financial assistance from the Monterey Preservation Land Trust. The Land Trust had been looking for opportunities to promote agriculture in Monterey and jumped at the chance to enable the sale of the property to people interested in using it for agricultural purposes.

The MPLT bought a Conservation Restriction on the 78 acres of undeveloped land at a bargain sale price, which assures that the land will remain undeveloped and available for agricultural use forever. And MPLT agreed to lend Mark and Bettina a small mortgage and suspend repayment until resale in exchange for a right of first refusal on the farm, assuring that the land remains affordable for farming.

Mark and Bettina and their two young children, Lucien and Iris, moved to the farm in late August, and immediately began raising chickens, ducks, and bees. They plan a modest vegetable garden this year, mostly for home use, but surplus produce could be used at Marlow & Sons and Diner, their two fashionable restaurants. Eventually they could grow produce on the 1.5 acres of flat land on their farm. "This is a long learning process," says Mark.

A native of Zambia, Mark arrived in New York City after running a bar in Florence where he met many Americans. "The coolest ones were from New York," he says, explaining his decision to move there. After working at Odeon, one of the hottest restaurants in New York City in the 1990s, he and Andrew Tarlow, a fellow waiter, opened their own restaurant in the then-dicey Williamsburg section of Brooklyn.



Iris, Mark, Bettina, and Lucien

Diner opened in 1999. Marlow & Sons, their second restaurant, opened three years later to handle the overflow from Diner. And just a year ago Marlow & Daughters opened, their butcher shop in the neighborhood. Marlow & Daughters received rave reviews as the first butcher shop in New York to sell only meat and produce from small, sustainable farms.

Bettina grew up in Brooklyn, the daughter of a couple who moved to the United States from Geneva in 1970. So how did a couple with roots in Zambia and Geneva end up in Monterey? "Moving away from urban life was a process for us," says Bettina. "It involved having children and becoming committed to the paths restaurants are now taking. We were getting to know where our food came from

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and the farmers who grew or raised it. This became appealing to us at the same time we were wondering how to raise our young son in an environment with no trees but a lot of broken glass. For the first time in my life, I realized I couldn't live in the city any longer. Besides, Mark decided he needed to raise pigs."

Their move was anything but abrupt. Mark spent six years looking for a farm. At first he looked in rural counties in New York, but gradually added farms within a 150-mile circle around New York City.

Like so many cases where major life decisions happen almost by accident, finding Chestnut Hill Farm was the result of a coincidence, or, as Mark puts it, "The stars were in line." Alejandro De Onis, a filmmaker friend of Mark's who lives in Stockbridge, learned from his friend Sean Stanton, who has farms in Great Barrington and Monterey, that Ellen Pearson's farm was for sale. After checking it out, the two men urged Mark and Bettina to see it.

The couple visited the farm on January 18, 2009. "Once we saw it, I knew we could live here year round," says Bettina. Sure enough, almost eleven months later, on December 18, 2009, they closed on the property.

The couple is giving themselves two years to experiment on what works best. "We're starting with things we like to eat," says Mark of their decision to raise sheep and pigs. "I like to cook," says Mark, "and I really like mutton. Americans don't eat much mutton, but well-raised mutton is a real treat." Their six-acre meadow will soon house about a half-dozen sheep. And given Mark's predilection for pigs, a few of them, too.

Rabbits will come along shortly because their chefs are asking for them. They're enjoying their eight chickens, and plan to restock the ducks that were eaten earlier by a fox.

Mark and Bettina lost no time in becoming an active part of our local community. They hope to buy a few goats from Susan Sellew and pigs from Sean Stanton, and their bees came from Honey Hill Farm. Six-year-old Lucien is enrolled in first grade at Undermountain School, while Iris, almost three years old, just started at the Great Barrington Co-op preschool. Neighbors have already helped out with mowing and plowing.

As the couple settles in to Monterey, they are wondering about the feasibility of opening a small restaurant that could survive from food produced by local farmers. "People miss the local café," says Mark, a man who knows the restaurant business.

Farming has always been a risky business. And with land prices out of reach for all but the wealthy, buying a farm is an almost insurmountable hurdle. Monterey is fortunate that the Land Trust was able to jump-start a new farm with such an enthusiastic and ambitious couple. Welcome to Mark Firth and Bettina Schwartz as they follow Voltaire's advice and cultivate their garden.

— Laurily Epstein

Eagle Fund Raises Almost $10,000 for Schools

Despite a fragile economy that has impacted donations worldwide, the passion and persistence of dedicated Mt. Everett High School students raised nearly $10,000 in pledges during the annual November phonathon for the Eagle Fund, which supports enrichment programs throughout the Southern Berkshire Regional School District.

Students from Mt. Everett Regional High School volunteered on two evenings in November to make calls for the annual event. The student volunteers are members of the school's chapter of SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions).

The fund, an endowment managed by Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation in Great Barrington, makes grants each spring for enrichment programs and opportunities proposed by students, teachers, and community members.

Pledges garnered by the student volunteers totaled $9,378. That amount will be added to the fund's endowment. Earnings from the fund pay for the grants, allowing the endowment principal to grow over time and serve as an ongoing source of enrichment funding for Southern Berkshire schools.

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Wildlife Report

Decades ago my dad, David McAllester, began a department in this newspaper called Wildlife Report. At the time it was presented under the general heading of Local Lore, which included my nature column, now in print since 1982. Dad also wrote a column called Mahican Notes about the First Americans in these parts.

We on the Monterey News Board of Directors have decided to revive the Wildlife Report, so I invite all outdoors folks to contact me each month by the 20th to tell me what you have seen. Dad used to phone up a handful of people each month to learn about their observations. I will be happy to do the same. If you get outdoors, if you notice the goings on of your wild neighbors, please let me know: Bonner McAllester, 528-9385, or bmca@berkshire.net.

Winter 2010 Report:

In the Gould Farm gardens, Steve Snyder reports a flock of 30–40 snow buntings. Also, Steve and a friend spotted a barred owl in daytime near Benedict Pond, sitting in a tree slowly and calmly moving its head, observing them back.

Gould Farm has also had coyote music every night for two weeks running.

Cindy Hoogs has seen a flock of about 40 cedar waxwings at Christmastime, also a remarkable robin with an all-white head and a speckled orange and white breast. All these birds have been visiting the Hoogs' crabapple tree.

Over by Lake Buel, Sue Protheroe has had an eastern wood rat under her birdfeeder, eating the spilled seeds. This is a very rare species in Massachusetts, considered by some to be "extirpated," though still known in western Connecticut. Up above, in the feeder, Sue has seen a flicker.

Mike Banner reports many cardinals this winter, unusual in the Banners' wooded setting, also black squirrels and lots of signs of deer digging for acorns in the woods.

Will Marsh saw an opossum under his birdfeeder for several days. Although not adapted for cold winters opossums have been in these parts year round for at least 30 years, having successfully extended their range northward. Will also has seen a large rabbit under his feeder around dawn on several winter mornings. This rabbit was out leaping in the air at night on January 19, spotted by a Monterey News board member following an evening meeting.

Bonner McAllester has been in the East Garfield beaver swamp and notes ski tracks and tangerine peels, two kinds of squirrels, and foxes which have been eating hulled sunflower seeds. There was blood on the snow under a big hemlock.

Joe Baker has seen porcupine highways between Hupi and Mt. Hunger Rds. in an area known locally as the Cubble.

— Bonner McAllester

Monterey Library Notes

The adult book discussion group has had some very engaging discussions recently. The next scheduled meeting is Monday, February 22, at 7:30 p.m. in the library. *The Thirteenth Tale* by Diane Setterfield will be discussed. Planning ahead, on March 29 they will discuss *The Lacuna* by Barbara Kingsolver.

For all of you who use CWMARS to order books from other libraries, we had some great news from the Western Massachusetts Regional Library System this week, as they will add a third delivery every week on Monday. That means books will be delivered on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. You can check the progress of your holds by logging on to your account on CWMARS—with this new delivery you'll see less of the "In transit" status and more of the "Available for pickup."

A small grant from AAA Southern New England and Posit Science means we now have two Drive Sharp CD-ROMs. One will be available on the public access computer and one can be checked out. These innovative computer exercises can sharpen everyone's driving skills.

Finally—one of the benefits of being in CWMARS is the ability to download from the CWMARS Virtual Library. If you go to CWMARS.org you'll see a link to the Digital Catalog—click on it and you will be able to download audiobooks, including some that are compatible with iPods, videos, and e-books. There are instructions on that site detailing how to download the Overdrive and other software needed to take advantage of this service. Once you have that on your computer you can download from the selections and put the items on your MP3 player, iPod, or Kindle, as well as use them on your computer. After the specified time the lending period ends and the files are no longer usable. You don't even have to leave your house to use the library!

— Mark Makuc, Library Director

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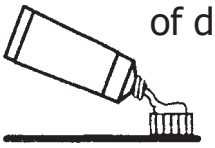

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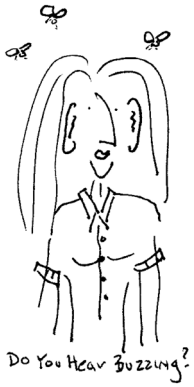
St. Valentine Saw His Shadow Today

beneath the blue
within the bright
St. Valentine saw his shadow today
without delight
he felt the screws
above the white
and frozen news
St. Valentine saw his shadow today
and chose to muse
upon the light
despite the ruse
that black ain't right
St. Valentine saw his shadow today
abolish night
is what they'd choose
sick vengeful crew
sailing afright
St. Valentine saw his shadow today
flying his kite
drinking home brew
globally tuned
and outta' sight
St. Valentine saw his shadow today
and it was loving kindness
and it meant twelve more weeks of war
and it was compassion
and it meant twelve more weeks of suffering
and it was forgiveness
and it meant twelve more weeks of retribution

— R. Zukowski



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Across the Great Divide

Recent dinner-table conversation, in another town another state:

"At first I had trouble killing them [chipmunks]. I'd put the whole trap in this barrel of water—we call it the Killing Barrel. But the trap would open and they'd get out and be swimming around in there. Then I learned to tie the trap shut. At first it bothered me in general, but not any more."

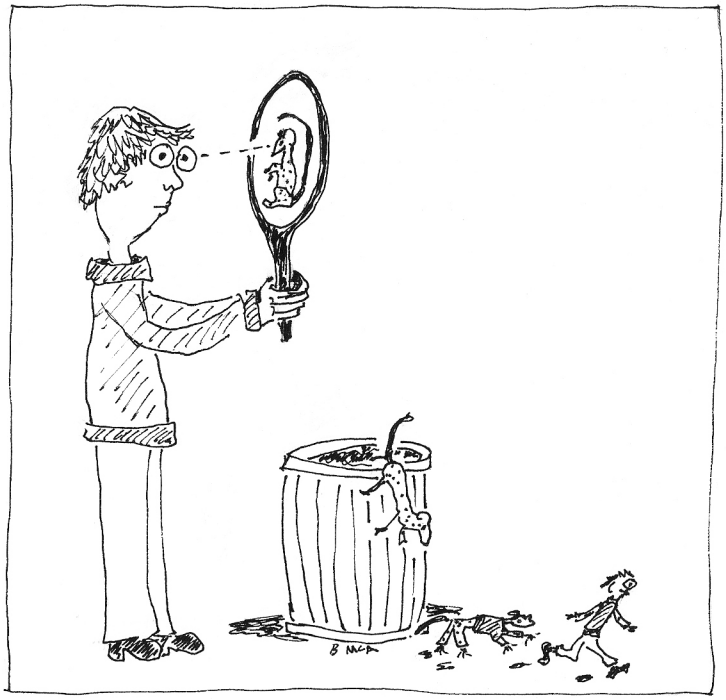
"They are disgusting. They eat my bulbs."

"The squirrels attack the suet. They look fuzzy and cute, but when you look more closely at them they are ugly, weasel-looking."

About this time I felt quite keenly that I wanted to go home. These folks, our hosts, were making me feel lonely as a human animal. If I lined up with them, what did it mean about me? If I took them on about the lives of the indigenous, wouldn't they just write me off as a kook, or shut down in defensiveness?

I told them what I do about mice in the storage apples and how I don't think it's any good either, illegally transporting them to a distant stone wall and supplying them with more apples and bedding and seeds for the short haul. I told about my old biologist pal who works the mouse out of the Havahart trap into a cloth sleeve, closed at the nose end, where he can feel it well enough to snap its neck. Quick, merciful—no watery Killing Barrel.

We are agriculturalists, for the table, and some of us plant bulbs because we love this sort of beauty, for the soul. We maintain birdfeeders but we have set ideas as to what constitutes a beautiful and deserving bird and what is an ugly and undeserving one. In the end, it is all about us: my apples, my garden, my idea of beauty.



One could argue there is nothing wrong or unnatural about "all about us," and that this is just Survival of the Fittest, the most organic concept of all. Let's consider the word "fit." Does it mean the biggest and strongest, as in a grizzly bear? Or maybe the smartest and most powerful, capable of growing corn in rows and beef in feedlots, as in a human being?

In both cases, the species is headed out. This is because "fit" does not have anything to do with strength, personal or mental. At the species level, it also means "fit," in the sense of fitting in.

Ah, but fitting in to what, we ask. The grizzly bear fits into the great mountain ranges and valleys just fine, living on moths and berries and fish and whatever else presents itself. So did the first people on this continent. Came the next wave and neither the bears nor the Indians fit any more, nor were they fit, nor have they survived except in reduced struggling populations.

The second wave of human animals are not doing so well either, not looking so fit nor so fitting. Surrounded by inanimate landscapes, confined to metal or concrete boxes except for occasional dashes from

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one such box to another, we know deep down that we are not and do not fit, nor are we likely to survive.

We are a lonely animal these days. Without our fit, we've got no pals and don't know who we are in the world. Sometimes we get together with each other and this seems to help, until our conversation turns to how embattled we feel, whether by chipmunks or by our own runaway constructions and emanations.

What to do? How to feel better and do better? I'd say it is time to "go way back and sit down," as an elderly relative once put it. Start by sitting down with the chipmunks or the Native Americans or maybe the mountain communities of West Virginia. When I say community, you know what I mean: all its citizens. I mean the Land Community as described by Aldo Leopold, to which we all belong as plain citizens, not as masters. The animate and the inanimate: the rocks and lichens, the rain and the ice; the breeze and the chipmunks, the summer residents and the tadpoles. We need a new translation of that first book of Genesis. It starts out so well, with all the community members looking "good," from the dry lands to the lights in the heavens and the waters, whales, fowls, humans of at least two sexes.

The place my translation goes bad on me is with the word "dominion." I know this is wrong. People back in the day, writing this passage, would have known better. Didn't they go on to promote the Year of Jubilee, the Sabbath? Are we not told to lay down our tools and go out to wander, to appreciate all creation, to free the slaves and throw off our own burdens so we can worship unencumbered?

It could be chilly out there. We could be hungry. Chipmunks would have a heyday in our abandoned beds of bulbs. But what might we see if we got out of our boxes and what community might we find? What divide might we cross, finally and for all time and just in time?

For a little hint of this, I recommend the swamp, in the rain. Maybe I can make it to the Rocky Mountains where the grizzlies still live; or maybe I will not go, preferring to curb my toxic emanations and walk on my own feet to the local swamp where I will discover the Land Community getting ready for spring. The buds swelling, the twigs coloring up as the sun gets longer and stronger every day. Maybe I will find the most critical piece of all: my own place among others.

— Bonner J. McAllester

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Free Film Saturday Feb. 13

The next in our monthly film series will be the documentary *Taking Root: The Vision of Wangari Maathai*. This film won too many Best Documentary prizes to list and is the work of Lisa Merton and Alan Dater of Vermont. It tells the inspiring story of the tree-planting Green Belt Movement in Kenya, started thirty years ago by one woman, Wangari Maathai, who had the vision to enable poor rural women to plant trees. Since then the movement has expanded to include education, healthcare, and women's emancipation in a country that, at the time, was ruled by a dictator. In the 1980s, group meetings were outlawed, but the women came together to plant trees and this was seen as "no threat," as women and trees were thought to be of no consequence.

As is always the case when a group of people come together and actually *do something*, the power grew into a movement of great accomplishment, and Maathai herself became the first African woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace prize.

This film will lift you up, in Monterey, in February. Go to the website for a preview if you like: takingrootfilm.com.

The show starts at 7:00 p.m., Saturday, February 13, in the Meetinghouse basement. (NOTE—this is the second Saturday in the month, not the third.) For information call Bonner McAllester, 528-9385.

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Steve Pullen with 105mm howitzer, Vietnam, 1967.

A Vietnam Veteran Remembers

1. Early 1980s, Burlington, VT

A few days before he arrived, I got a letter from the IRS informing me that an agent was going to do a field audit on our hospital. As the accounting director, responsibility for passing this audit was mine. Paul Mayer introduced himself and we sat across the table in my office and got to know each other.

He noticed my 1974 accounting degree from the University of Maryland and mentioned he had an accounting degree from the University of New Hampshire, which he had attended using GI Bill benefits. "The GI Bill paid for mine too," I said with a glimmer of hope that a fellow veteran would help me survive this audit.

"Were you also in Vietnam?" he asked.

"Yeah, the Marine Corps," I said. If he was Army I might be in trouble.

"So was I. When were you 'in country'?" he asked. I thought, we are brothers now.

"I spent most of '67 and the beginning of '68 to about the end of the Tet offensive," I said.

"That's about the same period I was there," he said. Now we were narrowing ourselves. There were only two Marine divisions, 1st and 3rd, with a couple of extra regiments attached from the 5th Division, which I was part of.

"I was with the 26th Marines," he said. This was one of the 5th Division's regiments.

"What? I was too." Now we are down to three infantry battalions and one artillery battalion. This was feeling eerie.

"I was with L Company, Third Battalion," he said with a funny look on his face. Company-sized units were labeled with letters. Each letter had a standard name from Alpha to Zulu. The word for "L" is Lima, pronounced LEE-ma.

"Lucky Lima? Don't tell me you were also with the Filthy Few," I said. This was the nickname for the second platoon, a unit of three squads of seven or eight riflemen, a machine gun team, and a 60mm mortar team.

"How did you know our name?" he asked.

"I bunked with you guys in Phu Bai," I said. At the base we lived in "hooches" built by the navy Seabees made of two-by-four lumber, screens all around, and tin roofs. About 30 to 35 cots were in each.

We didn't recognize or remember each other. I was not a member of the platoon because I was a radio operator for an artillery forward observer. We were members of Charlie battery, a 105mm howitzer unit that followed the 3rd Battalion wherever they went. Our job was to spot artillery targets and to protect the infantry. They loved us because no matter what the weather, day or night we helped them survive. Each of the four companies in the battalion had an artillery forward observer team. We were assigned cots in the second platoon's hooch when we were not in the field.

We were both amazed that fifteen years later we could run into someone who saw the same action at the same time. I knew just what memory I had to test. Even as I write forty years later, my body quakes because on that day my life was saved by the last person you would have thought. The forward observer and I were with the second platoon deep in jungle so thick that we weren't sure where we were. Maps are useless without visible reference points.

Memory is a funny thing. We all have argued with friends and family about a past experience and which version was accurate. Here was a witness to the same events I had experienced. Did it happen the way I had told my friends and family all those years later?

So I asked him. "Do you remember when we found the POW camp?"

"Yes!" said the man.

After two more hours recalling those times, Paul stood up, shook my hand and said, "My time is up. See you around." But we have never met each other again since that day.

What happened on that patrol searching for the POW camp? I will tell the story next month, though it sounds too improbable to be true.

— Steve Pullen

Steve will continue the story in next month's issue.

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Faces of Midwinter

The barn owl was believed to be the dairy farmer's best friend. His buildings were stored with corn, grain, and hay, where the owl roosted and nested, high in the rafters of his timber-frame post-and-beam barn, keeping down the population of mice, rats, moles, voles, and snakes.

The barn owl, with its heart-shaped monkey-like face, is able to locate its prey in total darkness due to well-positioned ear openings, in the shape perhaps of a television dish that picks up satellite transmissions from outer space, allowing it to focus on the slightest sound or movement. The faces of owls hold a mystique in the realm of literature as well, such as the hooded yellow-eyed snowy owls in the Harry Potter stories.

Owls are also linked to the nocturnal celestial realm, not only by their natural life cycles, but also by a facial feature similar to the man in the moon. The first month of the second decade of the twenty-first century saw a full blue moon rising into the night sky, one of two moons in a single month, a rare happening, once every two and a half years. After sunset the moon's face was bright and clear until it began to snow. The February full moon was known to the Algonquin as the Snow Moon.

The barn owl and the great horned owl both can begin nesting soon after midwinter, around Groundhog Day, with both male and female taking turns incubating the eggs in inclement weather, getting a head start on the reproductive cycle for the new year. Even if you are an avid bird watcher, because of the demise of the dairy farms and barns in Monterey your chances of seeing a barn owl unfortunately are about as good as once in a blue moon.

— George B. Emmons

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A New Kind of Resolution

I am not a fan of New Year's resolutions, mostly because they are impossible to keep, and therefore you are set up to fail. There are those few lucky people who succeed for a while and then an even smaller number who actually keep said resolution, but for a majority of people it does not end well; I am a part of this large percentage. In fact, losing weight is one of the most popular resolutions out there, so much so that advertisements for gym memberships reference it during the Christmas season. It's also a difficult one to keep, as many people will attest to, myself included.

I began thinking about the start of a new decade about two weeks before 2010 began. 2010 brings in a new decade for all of us, and for me it is a reminder of all that has transpired. During the last ten years, my life was oriented toward grades and success, and defined by some incredible opportunities and experiences. After being home schooled, I started regular school in 2000, and graduated in 2009. Looking forward, there are a lot of things I want to do. As much as I love being out of school and enjoy being in DC and working for Roosevelt, I am also feeling the first twinges of restlessness; it's time to broaden those horizons. Therefore, I did what only a slightly obsessive "type A" person would do and put a new spin on New Year's resolutions.

Most of the things I want to try, do more of, or do better fall under three categories. First is personal health, second is professional and career development, and, finally, personal enjoyment and indulgence. Instead of giving something up, or taking something out of my life, I decided to try and add to it—and not just with one item, but a whole bunch of things. Why so many? It automatically (as much as can be expected) sets you up to succeed, as well as enriching your life. For example, I continue to wish I would read more. The real problem was lack of a library card. So I returned to DC in January and found the nearest library (four blocks from the office); I then brought my paycheck as proof of address, got a card, and even checked out two books that first time.

The personal health category offers several possibilities: drink more water, take supplements, cook more and make sure I have some really nutritious stuff on my plate, and try some new recipes. Yes, before you wonder too much, working out is on the list; my main reason is different now though. It keeps my energy up, gets me moving, makes me drink more water, and helps with being healthy into adulthood; if I happen to lose a bit of weight and tone up, so be it. I am adding to my life with this mentality; I am not trying to lose or take away.

For myself, I had to consider things I really like to do. What would I do with free time, if I weren't sleeping? I would try to spend a Saturday morning in a bookstore once a month, drinking coffee, and reading pages of random books. I would go out to more live entertainment, shows, and concerts as well as take in some more museums and DC historical sites. I would read both fiction novels and books about topics I know nothing about: famous literature, art history, basic engineering, cars, aviation essentials, the 411 of wines, anything really. I want to spend more time with friends in the city, so I want to make an effort to meet up with someone once a week just to hang out and try new restaurants and bars. It would also help me know the city.

I know that many people like the idea of being able to give up something. Take chocolate for instance; it is not really good for you, so why not give it up? I think about giving something up and it is more about control than the benefits of giving up chocolate, and the chances are high that I am not going to make it. Perhaps one could give up chocolate for two weeks, but there is no long-term value to that. So in the end, I would deal with the issue of chocolate in one of the following ways. I would ration the intake, perhaps one "chocolate" item a week, or I could tie chocolate into a workout: a chocolate something if I burned a certain number of calories twice a week. I do not believe in giving up things you enjoy, but if items fall into the "delicious and bad for you" category, there is still a chance for positive change.

I'm not going to get into the career or professionally related items here—mostly because they are more time intensive and take some serious effort. Eventually I may zero in on those in one of these columns, but the general point about these "new" New Year's resolutions is that anything on my list is really about defining a new path for me. It is about a rubric that hopefully will help me make smart decisions; this is not a life plan, but a series of goals. It is about expanding horizons, and helping me prioritize as a postgraduate. My priorities in school were clearly laid out in front of me, and without them I feel a little disconcerted. When January 1, 2011, rolls around, I do not want to look back with regret, but rather I would like to be proud of my choices and of the priorities I stayed true to during the year. This is not about success or failure; this is about creating a new life, for a new decade. What a ride it is going to be.

— Tarsi Dunlop

P.O. Box 9, 01245

There Has to Be a Better Way

To the Editor:

The relaxing benefits of soaking in hot water are reputed to be an antidote for stress. In our case, the purchase, placing, and use of a hot tub in Monterey, has set a personal and perhaps regional record for stress creation. Five and a half years ago, we considered purchasing a hot tub. Before finalizing the purchase, I called the Monterey Building Inspector (since retired). He told me point-blank that no permit would be needed, but I should check with the Conservation Commission, since our property was on Lake Garfield. I phoned the Chairperson of the Conservation Commission and explained our plan. Again I was assured by him that no permit would be needed. Feeling on safe ground, we paid the deposit and ordered the hot tub and proceeded with our plan to repair a preexisting retaining wall in order to create a more level surface upon which to place the tub. One day into the job, the landscaper doing the work, calls to tell us that a member of the Conservation Commission has stopped by and told him that there was a "stop work" order. After many phone calls and a meeting with the Conservation Commission, they agreed we were within our rights and their rules in our plans for the retaining wall and the hot tub. They did advise us to contact the Building Inspector. We contacted him and applied for a building permit. The new inspector came to our home and examined the site. He had one suggestion—that we have a handrail to protect the safety of people entering the hot tub. We ordered the handrail, and the hot tub was delivered several weeks later.

For the next five years we enjoyed the hot tub and thought that we were helping to relieve stress, while soothing arthritic knees and warming limbs cold from skiing. Flash forward to the autumn of 2009. We receive a registered letter from the Building Inspector telling us a complaint has been made to the Town of Monterey and we have been found to be in violation of the Zoning Bylaws. Our "neighbor" who filed the complaint does not abut our property, nor is he in any manner whatsoever impacted by our hot tub. We know this same individual has filed a variety of complaints against other neighbors. Most recently he filed a complaint with the Health Department questioning our septic system. After investigating, the Health Department found no merit to his complaint. Two months, many emails, phone calls, paid surveys, lost sleep, and legal bills later, I appeared before the Zoning Review Board of Appeals. The members of the Zoning Board heard all parties concerned and then judiciously determined there was no violation. Victory? Maybe, except that I am left with the costs of the appeal application ($300), the boundary survey ($500), and a legal bill that may be standard but stings my wallet. I am left to wonder: why if there was no violation, did I have to spend a large amount of money to prove that fact? Shouldn't the burden have been on the Authority to prove that there was a violation? Although the Zoning Board of Appeals did an outstanding job of giving a full hearing to all parties and then rendered a very fair determination that no violation had occurred, I am left paying thousands of dollars successfully defending myself against what amounts to a nuisance claim. The "neighbor" who filed the nuisance claim is left with the satisfaction that he cost me a large amount of money (over $3000), with very little effort on his part. The members of the Zoning Board of Appeals had to spend an inordinate amount of their unpaid time investigating and then conducting the hearing. The Building Inspector and the Town secretary also had to spend significant time and effort on the matter.

Having spoken to many friends and neighbors in Monterey, I am aware that many other people have gone through similar experiences. Honest Town officials are forced to waste time and resources, because of personal disputes between neighbors. Having just gone through an appeal process before the Zoning Board of Appeals, I have learned some important lessons. I am interested in working with others to find a means by which nuisance claims could be filtered out, before money and resources are expended. If you are interested in addressing this problem, please contact me at laborpeace@aol.com.

— Elliot Small

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Preparing the Soil

Yes it's a little early for this. But understanding what is in the soil and being able to create a healthy soil are so important to successful gardening that I want to get started early. This month we'll get a look under the surface to see what makes soil such a big deal, and next month we'll talk about how to keep and improve on the soil we have.

If you have ever dug a hole in the ground, dropped in a few seeds, and wondered why nothing much happened, then you learned that soil is a very important part of your vegetable garden. We have plenty of examples showing us what happens when we neglect to nourish the soil. This in fact has been the conventional practice in agriculture for the last 75 years. The so-called Green Revolution, at its height in the 1950s and '60s, emphasized chemical inputs to the soil and vast monocultures in the name of productivity. This approach appeared to succeed for a time. However, we now know the consequences of treating soil as if it were simply a lifeless platform to fill with chemical fertilizers and herbicides, and till with increasingly heavy farm equipment while chasing diminishing levels of fertility.

For starters, such practices contribute to soil compaction. A good soil consists of pore spaces for air and water as much as mineral and organic components. When we over-till the soil or till when it is wet, for example, or burden it with chemical additives, we compress the pore spaces, making it harder for air and water to penetrate. This environment helps to kill off soil organisms, leaving the soil even more compacted when the space they inhabited disappears.

If it is compacted, the soil cannot absorb water at a normal rate, and we end up with nutrient runoff into streams, lakes, and rivers. The American Midwest, for example, has been losing topsoil at alarming rates for many years. Most everyone has heard of the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico. This is the region where nitrogen runoff from the Midwest flows into the Gulf waters, robbing oxygen from the water and creating an area where nothing besides jellyfish can survive. And it's growing—the dead zone now stretches all the way from Texas to Alabama in the summer months.

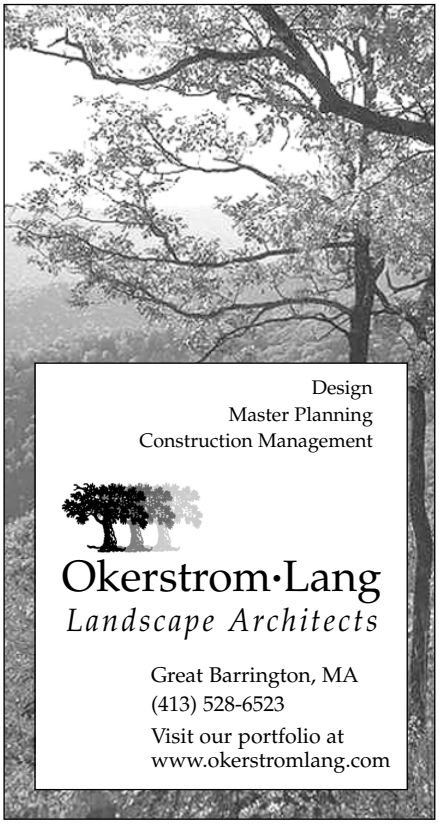
And then there's the Dust Bowl of the 1930s. I looked at some pictures of the Dust Bowl recently and was stunned—it looked like a major sandstorm in the Sahara. Decades of monocropping led to this disaster where acres of topsoil were lost to the wind. Perhaps our current topsoil loss is less dramatic, but it is no less serious and threatens the long-term health of our agricultural economy.

So what do we do about it? First of all we can begin to understand soil in a completely different way—as a living ecosystem with many different parts, which, when in balance, gives us a healthy support system for growing our food.

For starters we can acquaint ourselves with the soil food web. The microbiologist Elaine Ingham worked out a concept to describe the interactions between elements in the soil, and you can learn more about it, if you like, at her web site www.soilfoodweb.com.

The soil food web is the community of organisms living in the soil. A healthy soil food web forms protective layers around roots to help plants obtain nutrients from the soil and protect the plants from pathogens. Plants photosynthesize sunlight into sugars—roughly half of these sugars are used by the plant and the other half are exuded into the soil through the plant roots. Soil bacteria and fungi feed on these sugars and the organic matter present in the soil, releasing nutrients to the plant in the process. A gram of soil from the biofilm surrounding a plant's root hairs contains about six hundred million bacteria.

At the next level we have the protozoa, the amoebae, flagellates, and ciliates that feed on the bacteria and some fungi.



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When protozoa eat bacteria, they mineralize the biomass of the bacteria into food available to plants by releasing the excess nitrogen from the bacteria back into the soil. Next come the beneficial nematodes, tiny wormlike creatures that consume the fungi and bacteria. At each stage of the process, organisms are digesting and breaking down organic matter that becomes available as food to the next stage of organisms. Their processes build soil structure, so that nutrients and water are easy for plants to obtain.

Earthworms benefit healthy soil in quite a few ways. They can tunnel into the soil even down to five feet, providing passages for water and aeration in the process. They can actually increase nutrient availability by 500 percent because the bodily fluids they excrete with the soil increase its solubility. You can measure the health of your soil by counting the earthworms in a shovelful. Poor soil will have only one, or no earthworms present—a medium-healthy soil has two to ten worms, and a truly healthy soil will have more than ten worms per shovelful. Now I confess I've never seen ten worms per shovelful! But in some raised beds with significant additions of compost, I've gotten close. There is no point to importing worms for your garden, by the way—they will only migrate right out of soil they don't like. A better strategy is to find out what's missing in the soil composition, make the habitat more attractive to earthworms, and they'll come.

All the little critters we've been talking about live in the rhizosphere, the upper layer of soil where most plant roots grow. In the rhizosphere, soluble sugars from the plant's photosynthesis are exuded into the soil, and nutrients are taken into the plant roots along with water. Even in healthy soil, nutrients are lost through leaching and oxidation and must be replaced. In undisturbed areas like forest and grasslands, the process occurs most successfully if we don't interfere. But cultivated land is different and needs our attention to stay healthy and fertile.

Once you are familiar with the components of your soil, it will be time to discuss how we get from here to a good, healthy growing medium. One hint—it starts with a soil test! More next month.

— Ruth Green

Remembering Nan Merrill

Nan Crerie Merrill, 78, made her journey back to her Beloved on Saturday January 23, 2010, at the Vermont Respite House. Nan was born on Dec. 3, 1931, in Swampscott, Massachusetts, the daughter of Ernest and Merle Crerie. She was blessed with five children and their spouses: Deborah and Peter, Mark and Susan, Pamela and Danny, David and Lisa, James and Mary Ann; and six grandchildren.

Nan lived in Monterey for several years; she owned and ran a bookstore and gift shop called The New Spirit and took an active part in the life of the area.

Twenty-two years ago, after moving to Detroit, she started a newsletter called *Friends of Silence*. It has grown from a beginning group of about forty members to more than six thousand subscribers worldwide. She was also deeply involved with the Guild for Spiritual Guidance.

Nan shared her deep spiritual insights and love of writing by authoring six books and editing numerous others. She encouraged and nurtured everyone who came into her path. She led retreats, worked with inner-city residents, and was involved in prison ministry for many years. Nan was a dear friend and spiritual guide to many. And she was also an avid sports fan who enjoyed watching golf, baseball, and football.

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Remembering Stan Gradziel

Stanley J. Gradziel, 94, formerly of Pixley Road, Monterey, died December 27, 2009, at the HospiceCare Center of Boulder/Broomfield Counties, Colorado.

Born October 5, 1915, in Adams, Massachusetts, to John and Anna (Smola) Gradziel, Stan graduated from Adams H.S. in 1933 and North Adams State Teachers College in 1941 with a degree in Elementary Education. His first job as a K–8 teacher in a one-room schoolhouse in Cheshire, Massachusetts, gave him a salary of $1,000—but he earned an extra $100 that year for tending the potbelly woodstove.

Stan joined the Army Air Force in 1942, first serving as a librarian at Keesler Field, Mississippi. Then chosen for photography school, he was sent to Lowry Field in Denver and from there his squadron moved to the former Peterson Field in Colorado Springs. While there, he met his first wife, Beth. Stan served in the Western Pacific Theater with the 25th Photo Reconnaissance Squadron. Discharged in October 1945 with a Bronze Star medal, Stanley returned to Beth in Denver and they relocated back to Adams, Massachusetts for his job teaching. He took a leave of absence to return to Denver to earn his master's degree in 1948. Following that, he taught in Adams elementary and junior high schools until

1964, then became a teaching principal, serving through 1975.

He and Beth raised seven children at their Cheshire homestead. Following Beth's death in 1974, Stanley retired from public school service and entered the Peace Corps, serving as a teacher trainer and intern supervisor in Belize from 1975–78.

Upon returning to the States, he met Eleanor Varney of Monterey. They married on Valentine's Day 1981 and resided in Monterey, enjoying their retirement years in the Berkshires when not traveling with Elderhostel trips or visiting family scattered around the country.

Stan's hobbies included photography, woodworking, gardening, hiking, playing tennis, swimming, and canoeing, as well as playing the recorder and harmonica. He enjoyed daily crossword puzzles and listening to classical music. Stan was a volunteer usher at the summer music festivals at Tanglewood and a member of the Adams area Elks, Lions, and Glee Clubs.

In November 2005, Stan and Eleanor moved to Boulder, Colorado to reside with family. In addition to his wife of 28 years, Stanley leaves behind a sister, Blanche Kieltyka of Adams, MA; three daughters: Mary Beth Gradziel of Red Rock, TX, Ann (Roger) Tinney of Palm Bay, FL, and Margaret Hogan of Sugarloaf Key, FL; and four sons: John Gradziel of Wichita, KS, James (Susan) Gradziel of Cheshire, MA, Thomas (Patricia) Gradziel of Davis, CA, and Christopher (Beth) Gradziel of Cheshire, MA.

He also leaves three stepchildren: Robert (Judith) Varney of Winter Haven, FL; Susan (Wayne) Finkle of Milo, ME; and Patricia (Jeffrey) Whitaker, with whom he resided in Boulder. He leaves 17 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

Stan bequeathed his body to the Colorado State Anatomical Board, CU Denver School of Medicine. A service celebrating his life was held Sat., January 16, at the First Congregational Church/UCC in Boulder.

Contributions in his name may be given to your favorite charity or to your local Hospice.

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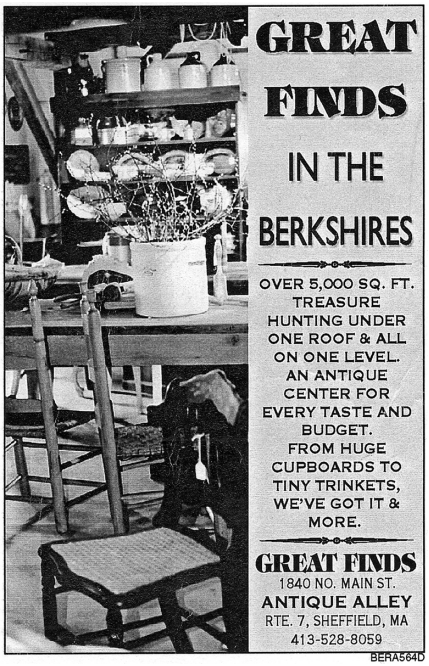
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Calendar

Every Monday (exc. Feb. 15): Select Board meeting, 4 p.m., Town Hall.

Every Saturday in winter: Youth ice hockey at Monterey rink, 8–10 a.m.

Wednesday, February 3: Republican Town Committee meeting, 4:30 p.m., Meetinghouse basement. See p. 8.

Thursday, February 11:

Talk on arrowheads by Warren Wilcox, Bartholomew's Cobble, Sheffield, 6 p.m. Information 413-229-8600.

Free Blood Pressure Clinic, Town Hall Meeting Room, 2–3 p.m.

Saturday, February 13: *Taking Root: The Vision of Wangari Maathai*, free movie, 7 p.m., Meetinghouse Fellowship Hall. See p. 15.

Monday, February 15:

Presidents' Day. Town Hall, Library closed.

Community ice skating party sponsored by Park Commission, 1–3 p.m., skating rink pavilion behind Monterey Fire Station.

Wednesday, February 17: Community Potluck Dinner, 6 p.m., Meetinghouse Fellowship Hall. Presentation by Gwendolyn VanSant of BRIDGE. See p. 5.

Monday, February 22: Book discussion group, 7 p.m., Monterey Library. See p. 12.

Saturday, February 27:

Meeting on Wilson-McLaughlin House Community Garden, 10 a.m., Meetinghouse basement. Everyone welcome. See p. 5.

Republican Town Committee meeting. 1 p.m., Church basement. See p. 8.

Square and contra dancing, 8:30–11:30 p.m., Dewey Hall, Rt. 7, Sheffield. Music by Mountain Laurel. Caller Joe Baker. All dances are taught; beginners and children are welcome. Adults $8–10, children $5. Information 528-9385.

Sunday, February 28: "Traces of Slavery in Colonel Ashley's Papers," 2 p.m., Bartholomew's Cobble, Sheffield. Information 413-298-3239 x3013.

Saturday, March 6: Rabies Shot Clinic for dogs and cats, Monterey Fire Station, 1–2:30 p.m.

ॐ

Contributors

We thank the following folks for their recent contributions. Your support makes it possible for us to continue publishing.

David Shifrin
William & Ellen McKee
Janet Garber-Check
Ken & Laurel Kahn
Patricia Stencel
Sharon Magruder

The Observer
December 26 – January 25

High temp. (1/25)	52°
Low temp. (1/10)	-1°
Avg. high temp.	29.8°
Avg. low temp.	14.7°
Avg. temp.	22.3°
Total precipitation (rain and melted snow)	4.52 in.
Snowfall	21.3 in.

Precipitation occurred on 23 days.

Monterey News

The Monterey News is an independent nonprofit corporation dedicated to fostering communication in the Monterey community. Our editorial address is P. O. Box 9, Monterey, MA, 01245. We invite signed letters, articles, drawings, poetry, and photographs. Submissions may also be left in the drop box on the loading dock of the General Store. Address requests for advertising rates and further information to the Editor, or telephone us at 413-528-4347 or e-mail montereynews9@gmail.com.

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Contributions from visiting and local artists this month: David Paul Bacharach, p. 13; Maureen Banner, p. 21; George Emmons, p. 17; Bonner McAllester, p. 14.

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